(d) whether CEA's advice has been sought on the above proposal from technical point of view; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI MEHTA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) and (e) The Government of India announced a Policy on Hydro Power Development in August, 1998 with an objective to accelerate the share of hydro power which has been continuously declining over the last three decades. As against an ideal hydel-therma! mix of 40:60, the share has gone down from 44% in 1970 to 25% in 1999. Due to this, the peacking deficit are high, thermal stations have to increasingly back down as they operate under base load condition and the grid works under stress. The policy has therefore, laid emphasis on timely completion of the on-going projects, taking up of new hydro-electric projects, survey and investigation of the new green field sites and preparation of detailed project reports.

In order to provide an impetus for accelerated hydro power develoment, various options are being considered to leverage the financial strength of NTPC. The NTPC has appointed M/s ICICI as a Consultant to suggest various options for leveraging the financial strength of NTPC. A decision on the modality of leveraging the financial strength of NTPC will be taken after analysing the recommendations of the consultant and after considering the views of the concerned Ministries and Planning Commission.

Sale of NTPC Assets

875. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:
SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-

items captioned "Ministry weighs selling off power lines, NTPC assets" published in 'Economic Times' dated 13th November, 1999;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether NTPC, NHPC and PGTL were referred to Disinvestment Commission earlier;

(d) if so, the recommendation of the Commission regarding disinvestment of these PSUs;

(e) whether the Disinvestment Commission had recommended long ago that Government should not disinvest equity in NTPC; and

(f) if so, the reasons for selling off the units now?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI MEHTA): (a) to (f) Yes, Sir, The Disinvestment had recommended that NTPC should examine various alternatives for restructuring. The Commission had not recommended disinvestment in NHPC and PGCIL for the present. However, the Government is considering various options including disinvestment for leaveraging of the financial strength of NTPC and PGCIL for taking up an accelerated power development and transmission programme.

Fiscal Limit under E.S. Act

876. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether CEA had advised Government under section 3(1) (x) of the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948, not to enhance the fiscal limit